

U.S. Serial No. 09/940,924

NIP-241

REMARKS

The Applicants request reconsideration of the rejection.

Claims 1-2, 4-6, 8-10, and 12-21 remain pending.

Claims 1-2, 5-6, 9-10, 13-14, 16-17, and 19-20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Smith et al., U.S. 2002/0143725 (Smith). Claims 4, 8, 12, 15, 18, and 21 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Smith. The Applicants traverse as follows.

Smith is cited as disclosing a method of managing consumer goods and/or reagents used in an analyzer, comprising, among other steps, a step of sorting consumption information on consumer goods according to consumer goods supplier. The Office Action asserts Paragraph [0046] of Smith as disclosing that the sorting is performed via a corresponding plurality of listings in a supplier database.

Respectfully, however, Paragraph [0046] of Smith discloses that the database employed by Smith "need not be discussed further" than the general outline that the database typically includes a database manager and/or database server 215, and that exemplary of databases that can be used to implement the chemical database 216a, equipment database 216b, and supplier database 216c of Smith may include relational

U.S. Serial No. 09/940,924

NIP-241

databases, distributed databases, and object-oriented databases. The paragraph neither discloses nor suggests that Smith sorts consumption information of the consumer goods according to consumer goods supplier.

In fact, the patent continues from Paragraph [0046] by describing that the supplier database 216c contains a listing of supplies of reagent chemicals and/or equipment. See Paragraph [0051] and Table 3, showing attributes (e.g. name, id, and address), type (text, integer), and description (supplier name, unique record identifier). Table 2 (the equipment database 216b) seems to indicate a pointer to the supplier database 216c. However, Smith does not disclose that consumption information of the consumer goods is sorted according to consumer goods supplier. Rather, it appears that Smith's tables provide data for keyword searching of chemicals, equipment, and suppliers by a user, without suggesting the sorting required by the claims.

It is noted that Claims 5, 6, and 8 recite sorting of consumption information of reagents according to reagent supplier, and that Claims 9, 10 and 12 are directed to apparatus including means for sorting consumption information.

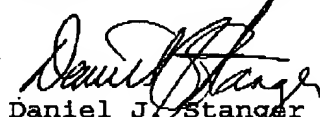
U.S. Serial No. 09/940,924

NIP-241

However, the Applicants submit that the foregoing argument is applicable to these claims as well because Smith likewise does not disclose sorting consumption information on reagents according to reagent supplier, and does not disclose means for sorting consumption information according to supplier as required by the apparatus claims.

Because Smith does not anticipate or render obvious the sorting/means for sorting required by each of the claims, the Applicants submit that the claims are patentably distinguishable from Smith, whether taken individually or in any motivated combination with another prior art reference of record. Accordingly, the Applicants request reconsideration of the rejection and allowance of the claims.

Respectfully submitted,



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